GAZPROM CUTS NATURAL GAS SUPPLY TO LITHUANIA. Kestutis Sumakeris, head of the state-run company Lithuanian Gas, told reporters on 2 March that the Russian gas company Gazprom stopped shipping natural gas to Lithuania the previous day. Gazprom cut off supplies because Lithuania failed to pay a $56.6 million debt by 1 March. It also imposed an additional fine of $5.8 million for late payment. Sumakeris noted that his company is owed about $100 million; state companies and seven major plants whose closure would result in huge losses for Lithuania account for more than half of this sum. Cutting off Gazprom supplies has reduced the daily inflow of gas to Lithuania from 9 million to 6.8 million cubic meters. Gas supplies to individual consumers have not been affected, but those to industrial consumers have been reduced from 5.2 million to 2.6 million cubic meters per day. Lithuania is seeking foreign loans from Germany and Japan to repay the gas debt. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

POPULATION DECLINES IN LATVIA AND LITHUANIA. The Lithuanian Statistical Department reported that at the beginning of 1995, the country's population was 3,717,000--down 6,300 on the 1994 level. Births totaled 42,832 and deaths 46,486, while emigrants exceeded immigrants by 2,700. -- Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.

BALTIC DEFENSE MINISTERS SIGN COOPERATION PACT. Defense Ministers from the three Baltic States met in Vilnius on 27 February to sign an agreement on closer defense cooperation. The new accord updates a framework agreement on defense and security cooperation signed more than three years ago. The three states pledge to coordinate relations with the UN, NATO, the WEU, and those organizations' member countries. They will also jointly participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace program. The defense ministers reportedly gave top priority during their discussions to cooperation in monitoring the Baltic republics' air space and territorial seas. The pact, however, is not a defense union: thus if one of the signatories were attacked by an aggressor, it would not be automatically defended by the other two. -- Doug Clarke and Saulius Girnius, OMRI, Inc.